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Inside Information

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INSIDE THIS "INSIDE"

Page

| | |
|--|---|
| Here's an update on the electronic dissemination of info from USDA..... | 1 |
| International Youth Year activities keep 4-H organization busy..... | 2 |
| OMB tightens its control of annual reports and newsletters..... | 2 |
| USDA radio reporter finds a nugget of a story in Tennessee..... | 3 |
| Calendar of USDA officials' speaking engagements available electronically..... | 3 |
| Concern about end-of-fiscal-year crush prompts deadlines that begin in July... | 4 |
| Did you get your "How to Get Information from USDA?"..... | 4 |
| Agriculture Secretary's annual report is available..... | 4 |
| June 12 seminar to tell ALL about the billing process for printing..... | 4 |

ELECTRONIC INFO DISSEMINATION UPDATED

All systems are go for the July 1 start-up of USDA's newest service for electronic dissemination of information.

National news releases, crop and livestock reports, outlook and situation reports, foreign trade leads, market reports, and other USDA current information will be available on-line through the computers of Martin Marietta Data Systems. This will be the first time that all these releases and reports will be available electronically through the same computer system.

Russell Forte, public affairs specialist with the Special Programs Division of USDA's Office of Information, has been working with John Lenher of Statistical Reporting Service, to implement the new system.

The project is under the supervision of Stan Procahska, chief of OI's Special Programs Division, and Roxanne Williams, chief of OIRM's Departmental Systems Review Board staff.

With news of the new electronic information dissemination service (see "Inside Information" April 22), questions have arisen about the future of "USDA Online," USDA's current electronic information service available through the computer time-share service of ITT Dialcom Incorporated.

Negotiations are underway between ITT Dialcom and Martin Marietta Data Systems to transfer USDA information electronically from MMDS to "USDA Online" on the Dialcom system. ITT Dialcom officials are aware of the many users (from USDA, land grant universities, state departments of agriculture and others) who would prefer to access USDA-released information via the same system they use for accessing other information, electronic messaging and other office automation services.

Other electronic news distributors planning to link up to the Martin Marietta Data Systems computer are Agnet, AgriData Network, Grassroots America, and Reuters. About 30 commercial users have already indicated a strong interest in pulling USDA information from the new computer when it goes on-line.

Anyone desiring the latest word on developments may contact Russell Forte on telephone (202) 447-5505, or send a message to AGR009 on the Dialcom system. His address is Room 536-A, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250.

YOUTH YEAR KEEPS 4-H BUSY

This being the International Youth Year, folks in the 4-H organization, which works with 4-1/2 million young people in the United States and can see similar programs in at least 80 other countries, have been busy with public affairs activities.

There have been proclamations drawn up for President Reagan and Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block, the preparation of factsheets, the assembling of idea kits for 5,000 local organizations, and planning for conference after conference.

In fact, there's too much for Joel R. Soobitsky, national program leader for 4-H and Youth Programs in USDA's Extension Service, to get done by himself. So Luella M. Zamzow, of the University of California, Davis, has been brought aboard to honcho the International Youth Year operations.

Also aboard is Elsie Carper, a retired USDA employee, a multi-hour volunteer.

Biggest event is the XI Interamerican Ibero Rural Youth Conference scheduled for Oct. 5-12 at the National 4-H Center in Chevy Chase, Maryland. Soobitsky expects 500 delegates from 50 countries.

This will be followed by domestic visits of foreign youth with rural American families Oct. 12-20.

Meanwhile, there have been or will be the National 4-H Collegiate Conference in Athens, Georgia, in March; the National 4-H Conference in Maryland in April; the International 4-H Youth Exchange Conference in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan in July, and the Citizenship Washington Focus Program all summer at the National 4-H Center.

The idea kit, scheduled to be mailed soon, includes such suggestions as local proclamations, World Food Day events (Oct. 16), acting as host to foreign visitors, getting to know the new immigrants in the community, and understanding your own cultural heritage.

Contact: Mrs. Luella M. Zamzow, National 4-H Program Leader, ES/4-H/USDA, Room 3860 South, Washington, D.C. 20250. Her phone number is (202) 447-3891.

OMB TIGHTENS PUBS CONTROL

USDA agencies are busy this month meeting the new requirement of the Office of Management and Budget to justify and list all of their annual reports and newsletters, such as INSIDE INFORMATION.

Under OMB's Circular A-3, such annual reports and newsletters are now considered periodicals, and periodicals have always required OMB approval.

Previously, annual reports were considered a recurring publication, not subject to OMB approval -- though listed since 1981 in almost-annual reports.

Until this year, also, internal newsletters were considered administrative and not under OMB purview.

USDA's Office of Information, which is compiling this year's report from lists supplied by USDA agencies, has until June 30 to submit the report to OMB.

John M. McClung, director of USDA's OI, asked the agencies to get their lists and justifications to him by June 25. Meanwhile, Frank A. Samay, publications distribution manager in OI's Publishing Division, is fielding questions. His phone number is (202) 382-9434.

OMB began requesting reports on periodicals and recurring publications in 1981. Then it added nonrecurring publications to the required list.

Also new this year: agencies no longer need provide OMB with a list of all their nonrecurring publications, though OMB may ask for information on individual publications from time to time.

REPORTER FINDS A NUGGET IN TENNESSEE

It's the little unexpected story nuggets that brighten the life of Brenda Curtis-Heiken, public affairs specialist in the Radio and Television Division of USDA's Office of Information.

One such nugget was aired the week of June 3.

Entitled "Goodbye Squig, Hello South Guthrie" Curtis-Heiken's report describes how the people of Squig, Tenn. got tired of how they lived in the late Sixties, got together, and did something about it....with a little help from their friends in the local, State and Federal governments. Even changed the name of their town from Squig to South Guthrie.

Curtis-Heiken left Washington, D.C. in May's first week to gather material for a major documentary on soil conservation in the Volunteer State.

She got that material, all right: one report on strip mining and reclamation work has already been aired, and another program on conservation tillage is coming up.

But sandwiched between is this story about Squig, population 400, shining brightly an hour northwest of Nashville, Tenn.

South Guthrie, as it is known now, was brought to the attention of Curtis-Heiken by a local conservation officer she was interviewing. He showed her a 45-minute slide show on the community's transformation that she described as "the most dramatic thing I'd ever seen."

A shantytown of tarpaper shacks, standing water, trash, no indoor plumbing, and high unemployment, she reports, has been turned inside out, thanks to a minister who led his neighbors into founding the South Guthrie Community Improvement Association.

A swamp has been converted into productive gardens. Government support of local enthusiasm brought a 2,000-foot-long drainage ditch, as well as low-interest loans for low-income families to build rows of red-brick ranch-style homes. Streets were paved, a sewer line laid, and a regular trash service inaugurated. A community center was built and there adult education courses converted illiterate people into job-holding productive citizens.

The community bought a van to transport folks to work in nearby Guthrie and senior citizens to their shopping.

The governor of Tennessee has named South Guthrie a pilot community for Tennessee's homecoming celebration in 1986.

Curtis-Heiken polished it into a 13-1/2 minute nugget for AGRICULTURE USA.

SPEAKING CALENDAR AVAILABLE

A list of future speaking engagements by top USDA officials, previously available in hard copy in limited numbers, is now available on ITT Dialcom to anyone interested.

The listing may be accessed by entering "USDA SPEAK", after the system prompt (>).

Maintenance of the calendar was recently assigned to the Special Programs Division of USDA's Office of Information.

The calendar will include future speaking engagements of the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Under and Assistant Secretaries and their deputies, the Executive Assistant to the Secretary, and other immediate staff members, as well as agency heads.

Printed copies will still be distributed on a limited basis near the first of each month. The on-line service will be updated weekly.

END OF YEAR IS SOONER THAN YOU THINK

People in the Publishing and Design Divisions of USDA's Office of Information celebrate New Year's Day on Oct. 1, the first day of the new fiscal year, with great relief each year.

The inevitable rush to get publications through with old fiscal year funds can be miserable, costly, and conducive to error.

Looking ahead to avoid such a rush this year, John M. McClung, director of USDA's UI, has set some early deadlines for the processing of publications and other printing jobs to be obligated from this fiscal year's funds.

July 12 is the deadline for publications requiring extensive review and a substantial amount of artwork--both new publications and major revisions.

July 26 is the deadline for publications requiring a minimum review and little or no artwork--slight revisions and reprints.

Aug. 30 is the deadline for completed camera copy ready for submission to the Printing Branch.

Sept. 6 is the deadline for form work, labels, envelopes, and other specialty items.

For materials submitted after those dates, McClung told agency information heads, "we cannot guarantee they will be processed in time to reach the Government Printing Office by noon on Monday, Sept. 30."

If the deadlines can't be met, McClung said, discuss the possibility of making other arrangements with Edna Carmichael of the Publications Policy, Review, and Development Branch of the Publishing Division. Her telephone number is (202) 382-9433.

HERE'S HOW TO GET "HOW TO GET"

"How to Get Information from USDA," an updated 14-pager on familiar yellow paper that lists the phone numbers and addresses (electronic and otherwise) of specialists in USDA's Office of Information, as well as the Secretary's Press Office, and information directors or their equivalent in each USDA agency, has been mailed by the thousands to people who would normally need it, including people at land grant universities and state departments of agriculture. But if you didn't get your copy, contact Nancy Bevis as instructed at the bottom of this page.

SECRETARY'S ANNUAL REPORT AVAILABLE

For the record, a succinct summary of the activities of the various agencies of USDA is now available. It's the Annual Report of the Secretary of Agriculture for 1984.

Single copies may be obtained through this newsletter.

BILLING SEMINAR SET

A seminar on the billing process for printing, from printing request to final payment, has been set for June 12 in Room 107-A of USDA by Warren Bell, head of the Printing Branch of USDA's Office of Information.

INSIDE INFORMATION is published for distribution to public affairs and information staff members of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, its agencies, state departments of agriculture and land grant universities. Any items, comments and inquiries should be addressed to either John Crowley or Nancy Bevis, Office of Information, Room 536A, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250 or to AGRO09 mailbox on the Dialcom system, or call (202) 447-7454.

